

Diverse Learners—Diverse Literacies Comments from the Editors

Kristin Rainville, Sacred Heart University
Katie Egan Cunningham and Courtney Kelly, Manhattanville College

What do we mean as a field by the term *diverse learners*? What do we mean by *diverse literacies*? Whether you are in a school that is experiencing changing demographics and you want to be able to better respond with powerful practices or you simply want to reach more students as readers, writers, speakers, listeners, and thinkers, this issue offers readers an opportunity to reflect on diversity in all of its forms and how diversity impacts literacy teaching and learning. We hope that the articles in this issue will inspire you to expand your own definitions of diverse learners and diverse literacies.

In this issue of *The Language and Literacy Spectrum*, we are pleased to include the following authors and articles:

Research-Based Articles

Cheryl Dozier and Joy Stephens explore in their article “‘My grandma is my gold.’: Learning from Young Writers in Belize” the range of ways two teacher educators and preservice teachers engaged with and learned from writers and their families in town and village schools during a faculty led study abroad experience in Belize, Central America. During this experience, the authors drew on three guiding principles: engaging in side-by-side writing communities, strengths-based responsive teaching, and honoring and valuing families.

Ekaterina Midgette and Zoi A. Philippakos’s research described in their article “Biliteracy, Spelling, and Writing: A Case Study” demonstrates the significance of dual literacy in early spelling and writing development and supports the New York State Bilingual Progressions Initiative. They provide practical suggestions for using online resources and for employing parental involvement to promote the use of home language in a heterogeneous language classroom.

Mi-Hyun Chung and Barbara Keckler explain what a reading teacher learned from working with a group of first-grade struggling readers in a series of shared-book experience classes in their article “Shared-Book Experience Using Science-Themed Books to Develop Scientific Literacy: An Interactive Approach with Struggling Readers”. In this article, the model of the shared-book experience using science-themed books is described, and questions and comments made by the children during the experiences are analyzed and discussed. The findings from the shared-book experience classes suggest that the shared-book experience, using quality science-themed books, may help students to develop scientific literacy skills such as science concepts and enhance reading and science thinking process skills.

Zoi A. Philippakos and Charles A. MacArthur discuss in their article “The Use of Genre-Specific Evaluation Criteria for Revision” the importance of genre-specific evaluation criteria in



revision. They explain how genre-evaluation criteria can strengthen students' understanding about writing for different purposes and audiences, can support their ability to critically read and comprehend, can affect their confidence, and can lead students to independent evaluation.

Voices from the Field

Barbara Boroson provides an overview of the ways in which students on the autism spectrum need support with life literacy before they can reach for content literacy in her article "Autism Spectrum Disorder Today: Life, Literacy, and the Pursuit of Content". She argues that these "life literacies" are crucial building blocks for basic functioning and necessary benchmarks on the path toward curricular learning.

Valerie Brunow shares her experience as a high school English teacher in "Authentic Literacy Experiences in the Secondary Classroom". Her article offers a resource for fellow high school teachers considering workshop-based approaches to reach all of the readers in their classrooms through differentiated and authentic learning opportunities.

Book Reviews

Colleen Van Cura Monaco reviews Wood, Kemp, and Plester's (2014) *Text Messaging and Literacy: The Evidence*. In addition to a summary of the text and critical analysis, this book review includes information about how researchers and educators in the literacy field might use this content to support instructional decisions in the classroom.

Interview

Maria Paula Ghiso graciously offers her insights on partnering with immigrant communities and ways to honor the diverse identities and literacies of English learners in an interview with **Mary Coakley-Fields, Courtney Kelly, and Katherine Egan Cunningham**. The transcript is included in this issue and the audiofile can be accessed through *The Language and Literacy Spectrum* on the NYSRA website.

The Language and Literacy Spectrum will be under the leadership of new editors for the 2017 issue. As always, *The Spectrum* welcomes your voices and scholarly contributions. We look forward to seeing you **November 13-14 in Rochester, NY for the New York State Reading Association Annual Conference**. See <http://www.nysreading.org> for details.

Enjoy!